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868 and is performed on an empty stomach, affording them a rigid and wholesome exercise, whilst they are instructed in the important science of war. Some five or six miles of ground are run over during these evolutions, giving suppleness to their limbs and strength to their muscles, which last and benefit them through life.

After this exciting exhibition is ended, they all return to their village, where the chiefs and braves pay profound attention to their vaunting, and applaud them for their artifice and valour.

Those who have taken scalps then step forward, brandishing them and making their boast as they enter into the *scalp-dance* (in which they are also instructed by their leaders or teachers), jumping and yelling—brandishing their scalps, and reciting their *sanguinary deeds*, to the great astonishment of their tender aged sweethearts, who are gazing with wonder upon them.

526 The games and amusements of these people are in most respects like
● 525 those of the other tribes, consisting of ball plays—game of the moccasin, of the platter—feats of archery – horse-racing, &c.; and they have yet another, which may be said to be their favourite amusement, and unknown to the other tribes about them. The game of Tchung-kee, a beautiful athletic exercise, which they seem to be almost unceasingly practicing whilst the weather is fair, and they have nothing else of moment to demand their attention. This game is decidedly their favourite amusement, and is played near to the village on a pavement of clay, which has been used for that purpose until it has become as smooth and hard as a floor. For this game two champions form their respective parties, by choosing alternately the most famous players, until their requisite numbers are made up. Their bettings are then made, and their stakes are held by some of the chiefs or others present The play commences (PLATE 59) with two (one from each party), who start off upon a trot, abreast of each other, and one of them rolls in advance of them, on the pavement, a little ring of two or three inches in diameter, cut out of a stone; and each one follows it up with his "tchung-kee" (a stick of six feet in length, with little bits of leather projecting from its sides of an inch or more in length), which he throws before him as he runs, sliding it along upon the ground after the ring, endeavouring to place it in such a position when it stops, that the ring may fall upon it, and receive one of the little projections of leather through it, which counts for game, one, or two, or four, according to the position of the leather on which the ring is lodged. The last winner always has the rolling of the ring, and both start and throw the tchung-kee together; if either fails to receive the ring or to lie in a certain position, it is a forfeiture of the amount of the number he was nearest to, and he loses his throw; when another steps into his place. This game is a very difficult one to describe, so as to give an exact idea of it, unless one can see it played—it is a game of great beauty and fine bodily exercise, and these people become excessively fascinated with it; often gambling away every thing they possess, and even sometimes, when everything else was gone, have been known to

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take their liberty upon the issue of these games, offering themselves as slaves to their opponents in case they get beaten.

Feasting and *fasting* are important customs observed by the Mandans, as well as by most other tribes, at stated times and for particular purposes. These observances are strictly religious and rigidly observed. There are many of these forms practiced amongst the Mandans, some of which are exceedingly interesting, and important also, in forming a correct estimate of the Indian character; and I shall at a future period take particular pains to lay them before my readers.

Sacrificing is also a religious custom with these people, and is performed in many different modes, and on numerous occasions. Of this custom I shall also speak more fully hereafter, merely noticing at present, some few of the hundred modes in which these offerings are made to the Good and Evil Spirits. Human sacrifices have never been made by the Mandans, nor by any of the north western tribes (so far as I can learn), excepting the Pawnees of the Platte; who have, undoubtedly, observed such an inhuman practice in former times, though they have relinquished it of late. The Mandans sacrifice their fingers to the Great Spirit, and of their worldly goods, the best and the most costly; if a horse or a dog, it must be the favourite one; if it is an arrow from their quiver, they will select the most perfect one as the most effective gift; if it is meat, it is the choicest piece cut from the buffalo or other animal; if it is anything from the stores of the Traders, it is the most costly—it is blue or scarlet cloth, which costs them in this country an enormous price, and is chiefly used for the purpose of hanging over their wigwams to decay, or to cover the scaffolds where rest the bones of their departed relations.

Of these kinds of sacrifices there are three of an interesting nature, erected over the great medicine-lodge in the centre of the village—they consist of ten or fifteen yards of blue and black cloth each, purchased from the Fur Company at fifteen or twenty dollars per yard, which are folded up so as to resemble human figures, with quills in their heads and masks on their faces. These singular-looking figures, like "*scare crows*" (PLATE 47), are erected on poles about thirty feet high, over the door of the mystery-lodge, and there are left to decay. There hangs now by the side of them another, which was added to the number a few days since, of the skin of a white buffalo, which will remain there until it decays and falls to pieces.

This beautiful and costly skin, when its history is known, will furnish a striking proof of the importance which they attach to these propitiatory offerings. But a few weeks since, a party of Mandans returned from the Mouth of the Yellow Stone, two hundred miles above, with information that a party of Blackfeet were visiting that place on business with the American Fur Company; and that they had with them a white buffalo robe for sale. This was looked upon as a subject of great importance by the chiefs, and one worthy of public consideration. A white buffalo robe is a